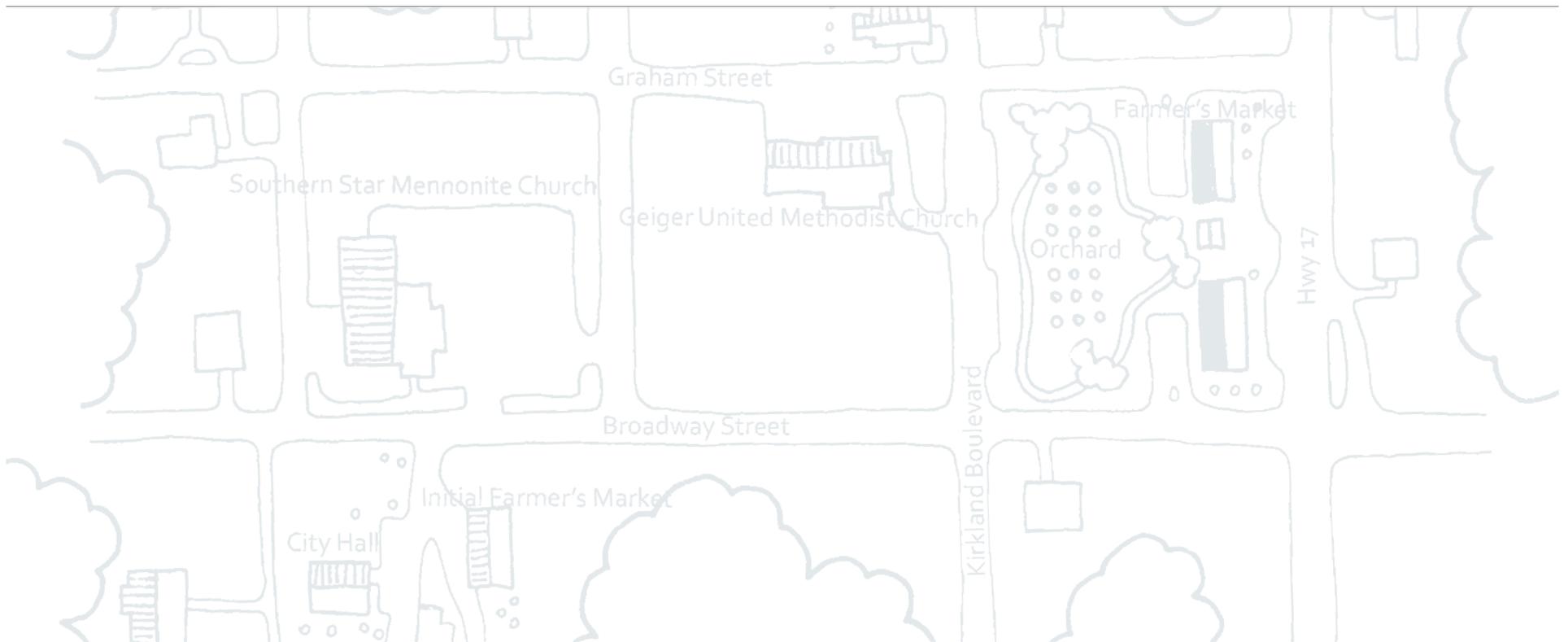




GEIGER, ALABAMA

Long-Term Community Recovery Plan
November 2011



GEIGER, ALABAMA

Long-Term Community Recovery Plan
November 2011



LETTERS OF SUPPORT

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROBERT BENTLEY
GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

(334) 242-7100
FAX: (334) 242-3282

STATE OF ALABAMA

November 4, 2011

The Honorable Michael Cunningham
Mayor of Geiger
201 Broadway Street
Emelle, AL 35459-2045

Dear Mayor Cunningham:

RE: Long Term Community Recovery Strategic Action Report - Geiger and Sumter County

Let me begin by saying how very proud I am of the people of Geiger and Sumter County for their incredible resilience in the face of the devastation left in the wake of the April 27th tornado. It is a great honor to be associated with the State of Alabama. Virtually every time I have been in the Sumter County area since the storm, I have witnessed unbelievable acts of selflessness, kindness, determination and adaptability among those who have lost so much, and those who have come to provide aid and assistance.

It has been extremely gratifying to see city, county, state and federal officials working closely together and with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) representatives. I appreciate everyone's efforts – action committee meetings, stakeholder meetings and individual interviews – to craft a recovery plan that supports the long term viability of the Town of Geiger and those who live in and around it.

In the weeks and months to come, I look forward to staying involved with the citizens of Sumter County, the various agencies, both private and public aid organizations including FEMA, to ensure that this plan moves forward effectively and efficiently. We will need all our patience, cooperation, creativity and vision to rebuild the future together.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert Bentley in black ink.

Robert Bentley

RB:RM:cf

Enclosure

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROBERT BENTLEY
GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

(334) 242-7100
FAX: (334) 242-3282

STATE OF ALABAMA

November 4, 2011

The Honorable Drucilla Jackson
Chairman of Sumter County Commission
318 Washington Street
Livingston, AL 35470

Dear Chairman Jackson:

RE: Long Term Community Recovery Strategic Action Report - Geiger and Sumter County, Alabama

The tornado of April 27, 2011, may have changed the landscape of your community, but it has also given the world an opportunity to see your spirit in working together to develop a strategy for your future.

With great destruction comes opportunity; you are seizing this opportunity to create a Geiger and Sumter County, Alabama, that will shine in the future. This Recovery Plan will serve as a guide as the citizens carry their vision forward. The community will make this plan its own, selecting and further developing the projects that most closely fit your vision for Geiger and Sumter County. The partnerships fostered over the last six months, through the Long Term Community Recovery process, with state and federal agencies, local stakeholders and the private sector form the firm foundation for this new vision and a stronger, more resilient community in the future.

Extraordinary circumstances have demanded extraordinary resolve. Faced with the daunting tasks of rebuilding home and hearth, many of you have also devoted energy, thought and creativity to envisioning the new Geiger and Sumter County. I am pleased that FEMA has been able to assist you by providing technical expertise and a staff devoted solely to the development of this plan over the last six months.

I commend you on the progress you have made thus far toward your recovery and your vision for the future of your community. It is with great pleasure that I pledge my support for this plan and look forward to a full recovery of Geiger and Sumter County.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert Bentley in black ink.

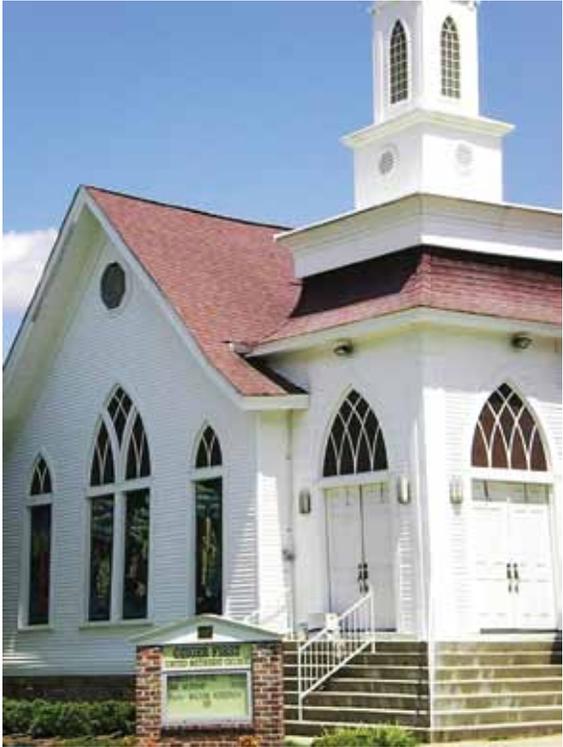
Robert Bentley

RB:RM:cf

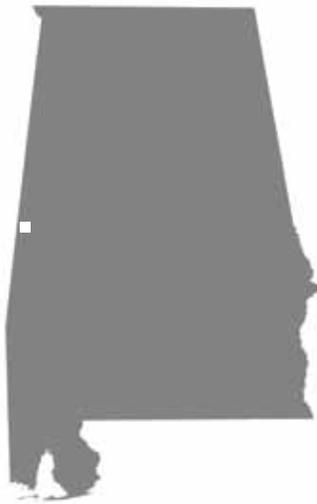
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Geiger, Sumter County, Alabama lies approximately 50 miles southwest of Tuscaloosa less than three miles east of the Mississippi border. On April 15, 2011, a tornado touched down in Neshoba County, Mississippi and travelled 48.5 miles in a northeasterly direction, striking Geiger as an EF-3 storm and leaving a path of devastation one mile wide in Sumter County.

During their efforts to recover from the disaster, the residents of this small community recognized the need for assistance in developing long-term recovery solutions to address the impact of the tornado as well as to mitigate impacts from potential events in the future. In October 2011, a team of community recovery planning specialists with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Program began working with community leaders to develop realistic projects to help the community recover from the disaster. Community leadership, including the mayor of Geiger and the chairwoman of the Sumter County Commission, formed the Geiger Long-Term Recovery Committee, consisting of community members who continue to lead the charge for recovery.

The holistic recovery planning process involved community members as well. The community was invited to a public meeting where they identified important community assets and shared their visions of the town's future. This participation was critical to the success of the planning effort as it involved those most familiar with Geiger's specific recovery needs. The process was designed and executed in a way that incorporated community-wide awareness and involvement, as well as advice from local, regional, and state officials familiar with the community. These officials were instrumental in identifying potential resources that might be available to assist the community in project implementation.

This plan is the result of a community-wide effort and includes projects that will help Geiger recover from this tornado and remain resilient through future catastrophic events.



INTRODUCTION



“We pray that no disaster in our time, or any time in the future, will mirror the storms that tore across our state in April.”

—Governor Robert Bentley



INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Geiger

Geiger, Alabama is a small, rural community located in Sumter County, near the Mississippi border. According to the 2010 U.S. Census data, 170 people live within the town limits. Geiger was established along the Alabama, Tennessee and Northern railroad in 1912 by John H. Pinson and W. L. Waller who, at the time, were both married to sisters from the Geiger family. The men established the company, Pinson and Geiger, and led efforts to incorporate the community. Through careful planning and smart marketing, Geiger became a thriving town with its own bank, high school, hotel, and many other businesses. Geiger's economy was primarily based in agriculture, with cotton being the dominant crop. Unfortunately, the town was devastated when boll weevils infested the cotton crop prior to 1920. Like many other surrounding communities, Geiger slipped into an economic depression, and difficult financial circumstances forced residents to leave in search of better opportunities. Continued lack of industry and employment keep Geiger from reaching the economic vibrancy it enjoyed nearly a century ago.

Sumter County

Sumter County was established December 18, 1832 and was named after Revolutionary War hero, General Thomas Sumter of South Carolina. Sumter County is a part of Alabama’s Black Belt region, known for its fertile soil, and was once one of the wealthiest counties in Alabama. Now, the county is one of the poorest in the state. Cattle and timber are the main industries.

Sumter County is home to the University of West Alabama (UWA), a four-year university with both undergraduate and graduate programs. UWA has partnered with many communities in Sumter County over the years, particularly Geiger.

Tornado Impacts

On April 15, 2011 an EF-3 tornado travelled 10.5 miles through Sumter County, Alabama. The community of Geiger was in the tornado’s path, and was one of the hardest hit communities in the county. Although there were no fatalities or injuries reported, several residents were left homeless. More than 100 structures were damaged or destroyed, including 61 houses and two churches that were completely destroyed in the Geiger community. This level of destruction prompted community leaders to seek technical assistance for their long-term community recovery.



GEIGER'S RECOVERY PLAN BACKGROUND



GEIGER'S RECOVERY PLAN BACKGROUND



RECOVERY PLANNING PROCESS

This plan is the result of a partnership between the Town of Geiger, Sumter County, the State of Alabama, and FEMA Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR). Key partners in the process include Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), and the University of West Alabama (UWA). This Recovery Plan document has been developed as a guide for local stakeholders, public officials and the community. It identifies key projects defined by the community that will address recovery needs and help revitalize the community. This plan is the result of community organization and community commitment to the recovery process, and therefore serves as a critical tool to persuade potential resource providers that the community is organized and working together to make recovery a reality.

Developing and implementing a viable plan requires support from local leadership and commitment from the community. Geiger's holistic recovery planning process embodied these principles. The dedication from everyone involved yielded a recovery plan with projects designed to meet Geiger's and Sumter County's long-term recovery needs.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The Town of Geiger held a community open house on October 20, 2011. Thirty-two residents gathered in Geiger Town Hall to voice their opinions on the community's recovery process. The event was comprised of two activities. The first was an exercise in which individuals were asked to post sticky notes with their ideas about community needs on a series of display boards that asked the following questions:

- What facilities or places are important to build a strong sense of community?
- Where does the whole community come together in Geiger?
- What memorable feature or place from another town or community would you like to see in Geiger?
- What quality of life facilities or places are important to families in Geiger?
- What would you like to see the Geiger High School used for?
- What businesses would be good for Geiger?
- What public services and systems are needed to help Geiger thrive?
- What are your dreams and visions for Geiger?
- What makes a great small town?
- What makes Geiger great?

The Geiger Recovery Committee and the LTCR Team worked to actively engage individuals throughout the exercise.

The second activity was a facilitated small-group discussion in which attendees were asked to identify the strengths, opportunities, and needs of the community. Ideas and answers were documented by the facilitators, and representatives from each group gave a report on the items discussed. There were similarities identified between the groups, including strengths such as: the people, churches, peacefulness, and friendliness. Groups identified

similar needs as well, including jobs, a community center, restaurants, housing and retail businesses.

The Geiger Long-Term Community Recovery Committee's ideas and visions, taking into account community input discussed during community meetings, are the basis of this LTCR Plan.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The following Project Concepts and Program Ideas emerged from the public meeting and subsequent Long-Term Community Recovery Committee meetings:

- Community Safe Rooms
- Community Website
- A Farmer's Market
- Increased Community Capacity
- Update the Strategic Plan
- Agricultural Development
- Housing

This plan is meant to be a dynamic document that will adjust to the changes of priorities within the community. These projects and ideas are not mutually exclusive, nor should their order in this plan convey a sense of greater or lesser importance or priority. Implementation of projects can be pursued concurrently or individually as time and resources permit. Projects are labeled as either high priority recovery projects or community interest projects. High priority recovery projects are those that directly address recovery from the tornado impacts. Community interest projects are those that enhance the quality of the community, though their implementation may not contribute directly to recovery from the tornado's destruction.

RECOVERY PROJECTS

COMMUNITY SAFE ROOM

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Town of Geiger
Sumter County

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project consists of installing a community safe room that will offer protection to approximately 80 residents (about half of the population) in the event of extreme weather in the future. The town has approved the first community safe room and is in the final site selection process. The town should pursue grant money for another safe room to offer protection for all residents. Note that the community safe room project is especially important because U.S. Census financial data indicates Geiger's property owners and residents have limited financial capacity to install an adequate number of individual safe rooms.

The community safe rooms to be installed will have all the necessary features including lighting, ventilation, and sanitation facilities. The Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) and the Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission (ATRC) are potential partners that could help with planning for additional community safe rooms

and future funding. They both have expertise in site selection, bidding contractors, safe room installation and facility sustainability.

GOAL

To protect Geiger residents from life-threatening risks associated with extreme weather.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project outlines the construction of an above-ground, ADA and FEMA-compliant community safe room in a central location. The safe room can provide near-absolute life safety protection to occupants during extreme wind events. In extreme wind events, such as tornadoes, the threats posed afford little or no warning to allow the general population to seek immediate protection. Consequently, the exact size and location must be determined by mapping the location relative to the population. In general, a community safe room's size is based upon the population within a half mile of the proposed site.

ACTION STEPS

- Identify the location — specify street address and latitude/longitude coordinates.
- Work with the Sumter County EMA for technical assistance for developing the safe room application and operations and maintenance (O&M) plan.
- Provide necessary information, documentation, mapping, and descriptive statement of the O&M plan to state mitigation.
- Submit final draft of the O&M plan to state mitigation.
- Acquire the public land, prepare the site, and build foundation.
- Install prefabricated safe room.
- Plan, publicize, and hold ribbon-cutting ceremony at new safe room location.
- Submit final, adopted O&M plan to the state mitigation.
- Educate the public about the safe room operations and procedures and conduct drills of the O&M plan with key safe room personnel.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

An installed prefabricated shelter, 80-person occupancy	\$80,000
Annual operation and maintenance	\$1,000
Total per unit	\$81,000

FUNDING GAP

\$20,000 cost share

POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- Alabama Emergency Management Agency Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
- USDA-Rural Development
- Donations and in-kind services for cost share

DEVELOP A COMMUNITY WEBSITE

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Chairperson of the Geiger LTCR Committee

PROJECT SUMMARY

Communication is a key to success for the Town of Geiger. Social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter provide community members low-cost tools to communicate with each other. Ultimately, the town is seeking a tool that will rival television, print and radio. A website for the town will drastically improve communication about community events to Geiger residents, as well as potential visitors.

GOALS

- Provide residents, stakeholders, and other interested parties information on the community and recovery efforts.
- Promote the community and generate interest to attract visitors.
- Provide options for selling Geiger-related goods online.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project creates a community website for Geiger. This website would be comprehensive and updated regularly. Based on the need expressed by the community and with a partner

identified, Geiger's website should easily be able to meet these thresholds. The Geiger Town Council and the University of West Alabama are the partners for this project. The town council will drive information and content, while the university will build and maintain the website.

ACTION STEPS

- Determine the information and content to be included on the website.
- Work with the University of West Alabama to design and build the website (this may include selecting a web domain, webhost and webmaster to oversee maintenance).
- Publicize the website.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

A functional website that includes search engine optimization (SEO) and Flash or Multimedia headers. With basic database integration, e-Commerce functionality and standard content management system (CMS) is estimated to cost from \$11,000 to \$15,000. With the assistance and support provided through the University of West Alabama, the majority of these costs can be provided as "in-kind" services. If the town were to assume the responsibility of hosting the website, there may be some cost associated with maintenance and content updates.

FUNDING GAP

None

POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- University of West Alabama

COMMUNITY INTEREST PROJECT

DEVELOP A FARMER'S MARKET

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Chairperson of the Geiger LTCR Committee

PROJECT SUMMARY

The popularity of farmer's markets has been increasing significantly across the country. Farmer's markets create the opportunity for farmers, artists and other small vendors to gain a greater share of the consumer market and benefit local and regional economies. In Geiger, where residents must travel more than 30 miles to access groceries, a Farmer's Market will help provide fresh foods close to home and create a venue for residents, who create arts and crafts products, a location to sell them. The proposed Geiger Farmer's Market is planned to provide a market facility that could accommodate truck, garden, and other vendor spaces and include a stage for entertainment.

GOALS

- Provide a market for local produce and crafts.
- Provide a social gathering place.
- Attract visitors to the community to shop.
- Provide a place for local entertainment.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Farmer's Market will be a covered, open-air building that will enable residents to shop for local produce and crafts. The project will include a 4,000 square-foot open air structure with a stage in the middle. This space will also include restrooms, an office, storage space and vendor booths. The stage will be a centerpiece of the Farmer's Market. Additional uncovered open space is also included for gathering places. This market could be a major landmark for Geiger, especially if it is located near the highway and visible from the community.

Note that completion of this project may be considered later, after needs directly related to recovery are met.

ACTION STEPS

- Determine or refine site location, size, and specifications of the Farmer's Market.
- Identify funding opportunities.
- Prepare design and construction documents, obtain necessary approvals.
- Prepare bid documents, review bids and award the project.
- Complete construction.



FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

Construction of Farmer's Market	\$60,000
Site work and miscellaneous fees	\$30,000

FUNDING GAP

\$90,000

POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development
- United States Department of Health and Human Services Food Desert Program

HIGH PRIORITY RECOVERY PROJECT

INCREASE CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY REBUILDING AND MANAGEMENT

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Geiger Town Council
Sumter County Board of Commissioners

PROJECT SUMMARY

The mayor, town council and county board of commissioners realize the need for assistance in streamlining the process of long-term community recovery and community development efforts. Developing capacity within the community as well as with other support agencies will guide local efforts for implementation as well as help identify additional resources to assist with project implementation.

GOALS

- Establish local capacity to support the reconstruction of the town.
- Create a collaborative program to support project implementation.
- Provide a focused effort for economic development opportunities consistent with overall recovery and revitalization needs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Tornado damage combined with a weak economy has severely reduced the capacity of Geiger to manage recovery efforts. The community

recognizes the need for a staff position to manage recovery duties associated with implementing this plan. These needs could best be met by a Recovery Manager.

The person filling this position should have knowledge of municipal administration, grant writing, and the ability to build relationships with regional, state and federal resource agencies. The Recovery Manager should be able to work with city, county and local community members to

assist with establishing priorities and organizing work.

ACTION STEPS

- Identify funding opportunities.
- Coordinate with the University of West Alabama to identify a potential intern.
- Develop a detailed job description.
- Post a job announcement.
- Interview potential candidates.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

The current position is planned as an unpaid internship through the University of West Alabama. Ongoing costs associated with a full-time, salaried Recovery Manager include:

Base salary	\$30,000 to \$50,000 annually
Benefits	\$7,500 to \$12,500 annually
Total Budget	\$37,500 to \$62,500 annually

An option for filling the Recovery Manager position would be to work with Sumter County and/or nearby communities to establish a “job share” agreement. A job share arrangement enables one person to share responsibilities for two part-time positions.

FUNDING GAP

\$37,500 to \$62,500

POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)
- The University of West Alabama

COMMUNITY INTEREST PROJECT

UPDATE THE STRATEGIC PLAN

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Chairperson of the Geiger LTCR Committee

PROJECT SUMMARY

The University of West Alabama worked with community leaders and residents of Geiger to develop a strategic plan in 2005. This plan identified key policy and community facility action items that would help increase opportunities and improve quality of life in the town. This project will update the 2005 plan and provide the town with increased capacity and strategic action items that address recovery, and it will identify economic opportunities.

GOALS

- Enable the town to chart their course to a sustainable recovery.
- Maintain a high quality of life that is economically sustainable.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The 2005 Geiger strategic plan provides the basis for this proposed community planning effort. An updated strategic plan would guide the community in addressing community priorities and building on opportunities. Public comments received during outreach efforts during the LTCR

planning process indicate that conditions have changed significantly since 2005 and that there is a need to re-establish attainable goals for the community. Some goals and objectives have been identified through the LTCR planning process and these can be incorporated into an updated strategic plan for Geiger.

An updated plan will guide town leaders and stakeholders on land use, setting priorities, developing a budget and establishing new goals and action steps. The University of West Alabama will be a critical partner in completing this project.

ACTION STEPS

- Utilize the Geiger Community Recovery Committee as a steering committee for the Strategic Plan.
- Work with the University of West Alabama to develop a clear vision and project goals.
- Refine strategies developed in 2005 to focus on attainable actions.
- Identify community teams or committees that will take responsibility for strategy development and implementation.
- Maintain the Geiger Community Recovery Committee as the coordinating group for plan implementation.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Chairperson of the Geiger LTRC Committee

PROJECT SUMMARY

Agriculture in the Black Belt has declined significantly. The agriculture industry in Sumter County now employs less than three percent of the county's residents. During discussions with representatives from the University of West Alabama and members of the Geiger Recovery Committee, an idea was developed to renew agricultural employment as an option for county residents.

Bamboo is a crop that has developed as an exceptionally valuable and often superior substitute for wood. Bamboo-based panels and boards are hard and durable and can replace hardwood products. It is also an important construction material in many countries, particularly in rural areas and it can be used for almost any part of a home including posts, roofs, walls, floors, beams, trusses and fences. People also use bamboo to produce mats, baskets, tools, handles, hats, traditional toys, musical instruments and furniture. In the food sector, bamboo shoots are becoming more popular.

Soils and climate in the Sumter County Black Belt would support large crops of bamboo and create the opportunity for developing support industries related to processing this material into products.

GOALS

- Provide a viable and economically feasible use for the rich soils in the community of Geiger.
- Create additional employment opportunities in the community as well.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project would establish a cooperative, creating a renewed interest in sustainable agriculture. This project requires cost benefit analysis to determine the feasibility of full-scale bamboo production in Geiger. The cost benefit analysis will be undertaken by the Alabamboo organization (www.alabamboo.com). Alabamboo is a collaborative effort by nonprofits and businesses that share a mission to bring sustainable bamboo production to Alabama. Alabamboo will identify specific species, crop sizes and associated costs for this project.

ACTION STEPS

- Undertake a survey to quantify the available land for bamboo production.
- Prepare a cost benefit analysis to determine the break-even point, rates of return (i.e. five year, ten year, and twenty year), initial required investment (minimum acreage and cost of plantings), and annual operating costs for specific types of species.
- Identify potential manufacturers and other users to determine the demand for specific uses of bamboo.
- Pursue government funding including, but not limited to, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Grants and Economic Development Administration Grants.
- Establish a cooperative or other company to provide logistical and financial support to the farmers.
- Market the concept to farmers, land owners, environmental groups and other interested people and groups.



HOUSING + COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



HOUSING + COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

Housing is a critical and challenging component of disaster recovery. Understanding market conditions will help the community to develop a program (or programs) that can assist residents with rebuilding their homes. U.S. Census data is used to establish a snapshot of conditions as they existed prior to the tornado. U.S. Census data from the 2010 Demographic Profile Data indicate that Geiger has a population of 170 people with 24 percent who are 60 years or older and 28 percent 19 years old or younger. The U.S. Census also indicates that there are 65 households in the town; 45 of these (69 percent) are classified as family households. There are 50 owner occupied housing units and 15 rental occupied units and a very low (two percent) vacancy rate. Key economic indicators from the 2010 U.S. Census show that the median household income is \$38,214 which is 93 percent of the state median (\$41,216). These factors, combined with the decline in the community economy and the fact that there have been very few new homes added to the community over the past 20 years, indicate that it will be difficult to rebuild housing without programs to bridge financial gaps.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

There are four community goals associated with the restoration of housing opportunities:

- Develop safe, accessible, permanent housing for everyone in the community.
- Incorporate resilience, sustainability and mitigation concepts into rebuilt and new housing.
- Integrate health care, activity programs and supportive services into senior housing.
- Maintain a walkable, pedestrian-safe community.

OVERVIEW OF HOUSING PROJECTS

The following section is a summary of potential housing initiatives and projects. The community should consider these ideas to be developed into projects. These ideas were developed based on a discussion with the Community Services Program of West Alabama, Inc. (CSP) (www.cspwal.com). CSP is a private, nonprofit, community action agency dedicated to improving the quality of life for low-income and vulnerable populations in its service area. The agency's mission is to provide resources and services that resolve immediate needs and lead to long-term self-sufficiency. CSP recognizes that Geiger's future is linked to housing and the ability for the community to work together to provide adequate, affordable housing options for residents. The strength of the housing market in a community has a direct impact on the local economy. Strong housing helps support the tax base, and local businesses.

These housing initiatives cannot be implemented without community support. The Geiger Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Committee will need to bring the community together to discuss these ideas as well as work

with various housing organizations to implement housing initiatives. There are six ideas for housing programs described in this section. They include:

- Initiate housing counseling assistance.
- Undertake a feasibility assessment for a senior housing project.
- Create a mutual self-help housing program.
- Create a community resource guide.
- Develop plans to create neighborhood pocket parks and playgrounds (coordinated with community safe rooms).
- Create a new community gateway project.

INITIATE HOUSING COUNSELING ASSISTANCE

Description

Due to limited assets and options, some homeowners replaced their destroyed homes with older, used mobile homes. There are also a number of housing units in Geiger that remain in poor condition, although unaffected by the tornado. The Geiger LTCR Committee can work with CSP to conduct an assessment of needs in the community, help homeowners determine financial options, and assist residents in applying for loans and grants. A housing counselor can help people in substandard housing determine options for repair or replacement. They can help people determine their housing options through pre-purchase counseling, homebuyer education classes, financial literacy education and credit counseling. CSP also operates a program to provide weatherization and accessibility improvements and administers housing preservation grants to provide limited, necessary home improvements and repairs, such as replacing a roof or completing handicapped accessibility modifications to a home. They can also help homeowners prevent foreclosure.

Goals

- Assist Geiger households to access financing to repair or replace housing.
- Create new homeowners.
- Help low – moderate income homeowners to develop assets.

Action Steps

- Coordinate with CSP to provide Homeowner Counselors to serve Geiger.
- Identify a place and time for counselors to meet with residents.
- Conduct outreach to residents in Geiger to identify people with needs, and schedule them for appointments to meet with counselors.

Potential Resource

- Community Service Programs of West Alabama (www.cspwal.com).

CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT FOR A SENIOR HOUSING PROJECT

Description

The Committee reported that many long-time, elderly residents in Geiger have had to move away to access affordable senior housing. The 2010 U.S. Census indicates that 20 percent of Geiger residents are 65 or older. As Geiger residents age, they often no longer want, or are able to maintain their homes. Keeping seniors engaged with others in social activities, and having access to health care, can keep them from becoming isolated while maintaining healthy, enriching lives. The residents of Geiger would like their seniors to stay in Geiger. If seniors had an option to rent affordable apartments with access to health care services and social activities, they would be able to remain in the community. Completing a survey of displaced and/or low-income seniors from Geiger and the surrounding area will help determine how much demand there is for a senior housing project, and if it would be more feasible to implement the project in stages.

Goal

Determine the demand and feasibility for developing a senior housing project.

Action Steps

- Establish a planning group to work on developing a senior housing project.
- Invite the Community Services Program of West Alabama to discuss this project with the committee.
- Identify potential properties in the community which could serve as a location to build a senior housing project.
- Coordinate focus sessions with seniors and local area providers to participate in planning the project and complementary supportive services.

Potential Resources

- Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 202 Elderly Housing
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Section 515 Program
- Federal Home Loan Bank

CREATE NEW HOMEOWNERS THROUGH A MUTUAL SELF-HELP PROGRAM

Description

A self-help housing program enables low-income families to build their own homes. A nonprofit organizes groups of participants, provides training and construction supervision, and assists participating families with loan applications to finance materials and subcontracting when applicable.

The Mutual Self-Help Housing program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) organizes families into cooperative groups to build their own and their neighbors' homes. Working in groups of 10 to 12, families provide 65 percent of the construction labor. The nonprofit sponsor coordinates with subcontractors

to provide skilled trades. USDA payment assistance can reduce the interest rate to as low as one percent. The amount of subsidy provided is based on the family paying no more than 26 percent of their income for principal, interest, taxes, and insurance. There is no down payment required.

To implement the program, a nonprofit obtains funding from USDA for the acquisition of the property, training, construction management, and assisting the families with applications for home loans. Rural self-help housing sponsors use administrative funds from the USDA Rural Housing Services Section 523 Self-Help Technical Assistance Grant Program to pay for staff and operating expenses associated with the program. USDA Section 523 Rural Housing Site Loans are made to provide financing for the purchase and development of housing sites for low- and moderate-income families. Community Service Programs of West Alabama has experience implementing Mutual Self-help Housing projects in Alabama.

Goal

Empower residents to become homeowners.

Action Steps

- Survey residents of the community to see if there are at least ten qualified families interested in participating in the program.
- Coordinate with a nonprofit housing organization experienced with managing a sweat equity construction program.
- Pre-qualify at least ten families for Section 502 financing.
- Identify appropriate site(s) and conduct site analysis.
- Nonprofit sponsor applies for USDA Section 523 site loan to acquire the site, and to the 523 technical assistance programs to administer the program.
- Develop a site plan, and complete architectural construction plans.
- Bid subcontractor work.
- Train participants.

Potential Resources

(www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/sfh/brief_selfhelpsite.htm)

- USDA 523 Site Loans
- USDA Section 523 Technical Assistance Grant
- USDA 502 Mortgages

COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE

Description

Community members have stated that they are not aware of all of the resources and organizations that serve the community. They also suggested that the community should support its local businesses. Development of a resource guide identifying local organizations, businesses and organizations that serve Geiger would address both of these goals. A local high school or college student could be engaged to put together a resource guide to satisfy their school's community service requirements. The resource guide would require research into the local organizations located within the town, which organizations provide services to the community, and what businesses are located in the town. This resource guide can be made available to local residents, placed at local businesses, and used as a resource by community leaders.

Goals

- Assist citizens and local leaders with identifying organizations and services.
- Support local businesses.

Action Steps

- Obtain assistance from a local student to satisfy their school's community service requirements.
- Research local organizations, local businesses, and organizations that provide services to Geiger.
- Write an introductory section that outlines the history and people of Geiger.
- Develop a layout for printing the document.
- Print and distribute the resource guide to citizens and businesses in and around Geiger.
- Review financial considerations. Research and layout of the document could be completed by a student as a community service project. Solicit assistance for printing from University of West Alabama. Consider whether to sell advertising to be put into the guidebook.

Potential Resources

- Student Volunteer
- Advertisement
- University of West Alabama

NEIGHBORHOOD POCKET PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Description

During the October 2011 community meeting, a major topic of discussion related to the need for places where the community could gather and children could play. The existing playground and sports fields in Geiger were damaged by the tornado. Repairing these facilities and developing new pocket parks targeted to young children will improve the quality of life for Geiger residents.

Goal

Create a place for recreation and social gathering.

Action Steps

- Organize a Steering Committee.
- Survey the community to determine potential locations for a pocket park.
- Determine property ownership and discuss potential land donation.
- Identify an organization that can assist with developing plans for the parks.
- Solicit donations, volunteer labor, donated plants, benches, equipment, signage, etc.
- Work with an organization to assist with grant applications.

COMMUNITY GATEWAY

Description

The community has no current signage to identify the town or landscaping to make the entryway appealing. Community members have suggested that an improved entryway would improve visibility and recognition of the community. The project involves creating a sign and landscaping for the entryway to Geiger.

The Committee also suggested that the community should support its local businesses. This could be done with smaller signs at the community gateway that promote local organizations and businesses located in Geiger.

Goals

- Identify the gateway to Geiger with inviting signage and landscaping.
- Support local businesses and organizations by identifying them on peripheral signage.

Action Steps

- Determine a slogan or phrase for the sign which is identifiable with the community.
- Identify businesses and organizations to be promoted on peripheral signage.
- Design and build or contract construction of the sign.
- Solicit donations of shrubs and flowers.
- Install the sign and plant the landscaping and flowers.
- Review financial considerations. Materials for the sign and landscaping materials could be donated.

Potential Resources

- Cooperative Extension Services (www.aces.edu/counties/sumter)
- Local nurseries
- Home Depot Foundation (www.homedepotfoundation.org)



NEXT STEPS + IMPLEMENTATION



NEXT STEPS + IMPLEMENTATION

IDENTIFY CATALYST PROJECTS

Not all projects in the Long-Term Community Recovery Plan can be implemented immediately. There are many factors that affect the length of time it takes to develop, design, and implement a project. Therefore, it is important to identify catalyst projects as a priority. Catalyst projects are high-profile initiatives that, as they are implemented, attract additional investment and redevelopment to occur in close proximity to the initial project. A catalyst project demonstrates the community commitment for recovery and will often cross sectors (such as an economic development project stimulating a housing project).

The recovery committee continues to work with local leaders, stakeholders, and the community to identify catalyst projects and establish priorities within the LTRC Plan. Disaster recovery requires a wide range of projects to be undertaken. Coordinating these projects will require the development of project timelines. Creating project timelines will provide a clear picture of when projects are approaching milestone marks and where project coordination will be required.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The town council and recovery committee have clear roles and responsibilities related to the LTCR planning process. As the LTCR process transitions into implementation, roles and responsibilities may need to be redefined and the committee structure adjusted to accommodate project champions and other stakeholders. Community leaders should continue to identify individuals and organizations that can play lead and support or advisory roles for recovery projects. Creating an organization matrix will provide a structure to help the recovery committee maintain communication with project leaders.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The organization matrix is a tool for identifying who the committee should be communicating with. A formal communication policy identifies the process to be followed so that effective information sharing takes place. The recovery committee is continuing to hold regular meetings with stakeholders and leaders as the primary communication tool. These meetings should include an agenda that has each project lead or champion reporting on the status of their projects, milestones achieved and barriers they are encountering. In addition, a communication strategy should provide information to residents of the community as well as media outlets as an ongoing activity. Other tools to help strengthen communication include regular newsletters, recovery websites and social media sites.

RECOVERY MANAGER

The complex job of managing LTCR Plan implementation can be facilitated by hiring a Recovery Manager to assist community leaders and the recovery committee. The Recovery Manager can take on the role of managing the committee activities as well as communication and accountability to the organizational structure. As the central point of contact for recovery project management, the Recovery Manager shares project issues with internal stakeholders and strives to identify outside resources for project implementation. The Geiger Long-Term Community Recovery Plan includes a project outlining the roles and responsibilities of this position and identifies potential funding scenarios.



FUNDING + CAPACITY BUILDING



FUNDING + CAPACITY BUILDING

GUIDE AND TOOLS

Alabama Resource Guide and Resource Matrices — Federal, State and Regional Resources

The matrix of resources, entitled *Alabama Project Categories — Potential Resources* that supports this document, identifies specific agencies and organizations that the community can approach about potential funding or technical assistance resources to implement community recovery and revitalization projects. The matrix references the *Alabama Resource Guide* (included as a companion disc) that provides an overview of hundreds of federal, state, and regional funding sources, both public and private. In addition, each Project Development Guide (included on a separate companion disc) is paired with a project-specific matrix of resources that are suggested starting points in researching potential funding sources. Unless otherwise noted, these project-specific matrices also refer to funding sources listed in the *Alabama Resource Guide*.

All grant programs have specific eligibility requirements for applicants. Some grant programs fund only 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organizations, while others fund only governmental units, such as towns or cities. Some grants are available to both types of applicants. Therefore, public-private partnerships are important to maximize funding, capacity building, and other opportunities.

Some grant programs restrict their funding to communities that meet certain eligibility criteria, such as falling within a certain geographic area or possessing certain demographic characteristics like high poverty or unemployment rates. Meeting the specified program criteria could result in a special designation that allows the community to participate in programs and apply for grant funding unavailable to communities that do not meet the program criteria. Some designations specifically target more urban areas for assistance, while others specifically target rural areas. Examples of designations, often referred to as designated areas or zones, that provide funding opportunities include:

- Food deserts in metropolitan areas
- Distressed communities
- Housing or economic development hot zones
- Health professional shortage areas and/or medically underserved areas
- Brownfields

Many specific programs exist to support different types of designated zones or areas. Designations can be part of a successful strategy to secure funding to develop recovery strategies and implement projects that affect a community's economy and vitality.

The census tract matrix, *Census Tract Information for LTCR Communities* that supports this document, shows how the use of designations can help secure funding. This matrix identifies federal grant and financing opportunities, many of which are based on designations that can serve as a core part of the community's grant application, make the project competitive, and facilitate funding. It should be noted that even if a census tract is not designated as eligible for funding or presents a financial resource opportunity, the governing federal agencies do have waiver procedures, especially when it comes to such factors as loss and devastation from disasters.

For more specific information about designations and related funding, contact your regional council of governments or planning commission.

IMPORTANT PARTNERS

Forming alliances and partnerships can increase grant-writing and project implementation success. Partnerships, especially public-private partnerships, can maximize funding, capacity building, and other opportunities. Alliances and partnerships can exist between two communities and/or communities and other organizations. For example, if two or more adjacent communities each submit an application to fund a medical center, they will compete against each other. Conversely, if they submit an application together for one shared facility, they will have a stronger application, less competition, and may even receive more funds. Programs that fund economic development activities often favor a regional approach to overcome challenges. A community and its recovery committee or nonprofit organization may partner with other local, regional, and statewide organizations to build capacity or develop, fund, and implement recovery strategies and projects.

Regional Councils or Planning Commissions

Regional councils are quasi-governmental organizations and another important resource for communities. A regional council or planning commission is a public organization that encompasses a multi-jurisdictional regional community. The governing bodies of councils are primarily composed of local government elected officials and appointed representatives of local communities and state government. The Alabama Association of Regional Planning Councils includes 12 regional planning councils/commissions to support Alabama communities. Five of these councils/commissions serve Alabama's communities that are engaged in the long-term community recovery planning process.

Through communication, planning, policymaking, coordination, advocacy, grant writing and technical assistance, the commission/council serves the local governments and citizens in the region. These commissions/councils frequently deal with issues and needs that cross city, town, and county boundaries. Also, each region can provide special services as determined by its board of directors. The services and programs offered depend upon local needs and priorities within the region. These needs may exist currently or be based on projected growth, changing lifestyles and demographics, and technological innovations.

Regional councils and planning commissions are an important asset for long-term community recovery work and are well-versed on recovery challenges and needs. They have resources and information that help a community to make decisions about implementation strategies, especially as they pertain to designations, alliances, and grant applications. Additionally, each regional council or planning commission has a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS), which offers a detailed view of the opportunities, needs, and challenges within the region to promote and sustain economic growth.

Community members may visit www.atrcregion6.com for a full list of the programs and services offered by the Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission.

501(c)(3) Charitable Nonprofit Organizations

A 501(c)(3) refers to a charitable nonprofit organization that is incorporated in a state and designated by the Internal Revenue Service as a charitable entity. Nonprofits do not pay federal taxes on programs and services related to their charitable mission. Nonprofit missions can include aid to vulnerable populations; construction, erection and/or maintenance of historic buildings, monuments, or works; reducing the burdens of government; community development; youth programs; and other charitable purposes.

Many grant programs offer funding only to 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofits. A community's recovery committee may decide to incorporate as a charitable nonprofit and partner with the local government to strengthen the recovery effort and opportunities. Depending on the recovery goals and future development plans, the community may choose to structure its charitable nonprofit as a certain type of community service or development organization. These types of organizations are described below.

Community Development Corporations

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are community-established organizations that anchor local capital through residential and commercial development, ranging from affordable housing to shopping centers and businesses.

Community Housing Development Organizations

Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) earn designation through the federal HOME program and serve as a means to finance housing projects. A CHDO generally is defined as a nonprofit, community-based community service organization that develops affordable housing in the low-income community it serves.

Community Development Financial Institutions

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) earn designation from the U.S. Treasury Department. A CDFI is a private-sector financial institution that focuses on personal lending and business development efforts in local communities. They are primarily funding sources to support small business growth and development. CDFIs can be an important source for the use of New Market Tax Credits to finance economic development efforts.

Economic Development Organizations

Economic Development Organizations serve as the primary sources of grant funds from federal agencies involved in economic development.

Certified Development Corporations

Certified Development Corporations earn their designation from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and offer any form of SBA loan assistance. Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) are partnerships primarily between the government and colleges to provide educational services for small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Housing Resource Centers

Housing Resource Centers (HRCs) are central points for technical assistance and a resource for stimulating new housing construction as well as rehabilitation. HRCs help existing and potential homeowners to locate resources to repair, build, or purchase a home.

A community or committee should explore all options to determine the best vehicle to develop its recovery strategies and projects. It may choose to structure as, or partner with, one of the community development organization types. Alternatively, the community or committee may elect to incorporate as a charitable nonprofit corporation but not structure it specifically as one of these organizations, based on what best meets the needs and goals of the community for the both its recovery and future development.

Agencies, Universities and Associations

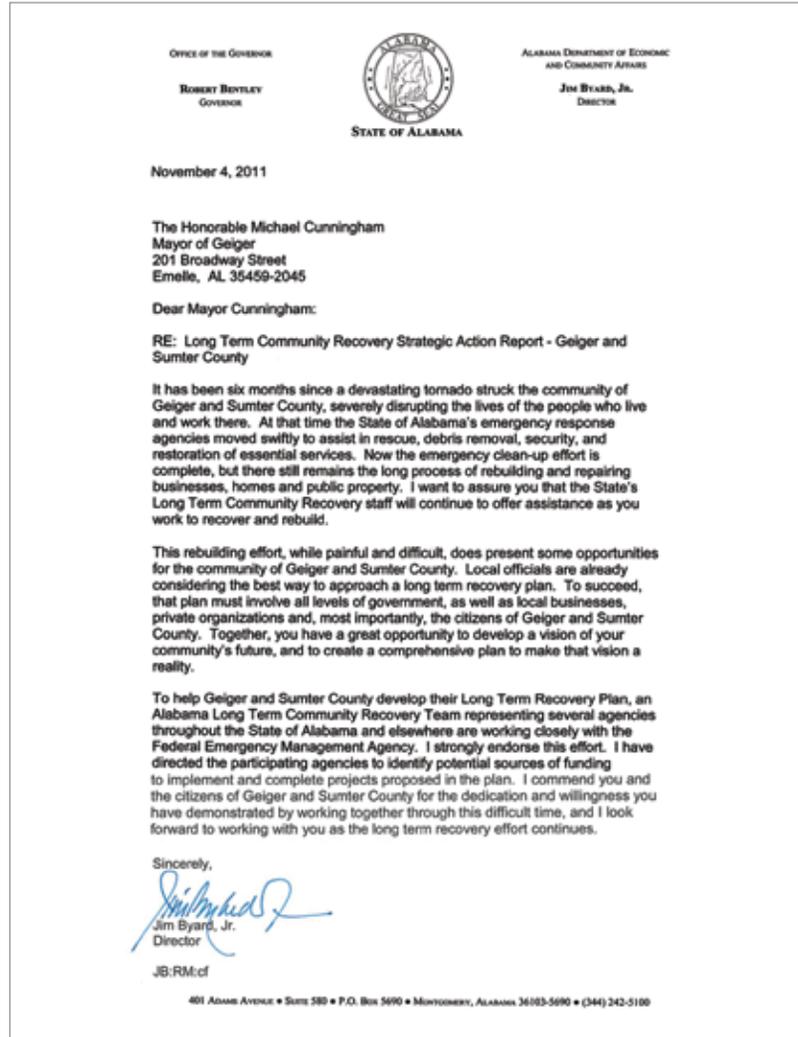
State agencies, universities, and associations provide a broad range of financial and other support to communities and organizations of interest to them. They are an excellent resource for capacity building support, technical assistance, studies and projections, and sometimes even funding. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) is the coordinating agency under the Governor's Office for long-term community recovery efforts. There are numerous supporting state agencies that assist in long-term community recovery. A list of links to State agency websites is included in Section V of the *Alabama Resource Guide*.

Examples of Other Potential Partners

- Alabama Association of Nonprofits
<http://alabamaprofits.org>
- Alabama Communities of Excellence
www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org
- Your Town Alabama
www.yourtownalabama.org
- Alabama Home Builders Association
www.hbaa.org
- Local university centers and programs
- Local chambers of commerce
- Local development authorities

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but it does illustrate that numerous agencies and organizations can partner with communities to gain needed support during the recovery process. The regional council or planning commission that serves the region is an excellent resource for cultivating and strengthening relationships with these key partners, both public and private. Typically, the regional council or planning commission has existing relationships with the organizations and agencies that are active in the region and can provide insight and resources to help identify and secure critical support for projects. Assembling a strong team of partners to provide support is essential to holistic recovery.





OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROBERT BENVEY
GOVERNOR



STATE OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

JIM BYARD, JR.
DIRECTOR

November 4, 2011

The Honorable Drucilla Jackson
Chairman of Sumter County Commission
318 Washington Street
Livingston, AL 35470

Dear Chairman Jackson:

RE: Long Term Community Recovery Strategic Action Report - Geiger and
Sumter County, Alabama

It has been six months since a devastating tornado struck the community of Geiger and Sumter County, severely disrupting the lives of the people who live and work there. At that time the State of Alabama's emergency response agencies moved swiftly to assist in rescue, debris removal, security, and restoration of essential services. Now the emergency clean-up effort is complete, but there still remains the long process of rebuilding and repairing businesses, homes and public property. I want to assure you that the State's Long Term Community Recovery staff will continue to offer assistance as you work to recover and rebuild.

This rebuilding effort, while painful and difficult, does present some opportunities for the community of Geiger and Sumter County. Local officials are already considering the best way to approach a long term recovery plan. To succeed, that plan must involve all levels of government, as well as local businesses, private organizations and, most importantly, the citizens of Geiger and Sumter County. Together, you have a great opportunity to develop a vision of your community's future, and to create a comprehensive plan to make that vision a reality.

To help Geiger and Sumter County develop their Long Term Recovery Plan, an Alabama Long Term Community Recovery Team representing several agencies throughout the State of Alabama and elsewhere are working closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I strongly endorse this effort. I have directed the participating agencies to identify potential sources of funding to implement and complete projects proposed in the plan. I commend you and the citizens of Geiger and Sumter County for the dedication and willingness you have demonstrated by working together through this difficult time, and I look forward to working with you as the long term recovery effort continues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Byard, Jr.", written over a printed name and title.

Jim Byard, Jr.
Director

JB:RM:cf

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Town of Geiger
Sumter County
Geiger Long-Term Community Recovery Committee
Geiger Community Safe Room Subcommittee
Geiger Disaster Preparedness Subcommittee
University of West Alabama Division of Outreach Services
University of West Alabama Small Business Development Center
Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission
Alabamboo
Community Services Programs of West Alabama

CITY OF GEIGER, ALABAMA

ADOPTED AND APPROVED THIS 6th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2011.

WHEREAS, the City of Geiger, Alabama and the surrounding communities in Sumter County received major devastation as a result of the tornado that struck our area on April 15, 2011.

WHEREAS, the impact of the tornado included loss of life in Alabama, as well as the loss of a major portion of the downtown business area and other housing, business, educational, government, church and community facilities.

AND WHEREAS, the City of Geiger has lost a large portion of its traditional tax base and revenue, including revenue necessary to cover operations resulting from the tornado.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the City of Geiger request that FEMA's Long-Term Community Recovery Group and its partner agencies, otherwise known as Emergency Support Function Fourteen (ESF-14), be deployed as soon as possible to fully support the City of Geiger in our long term recovery.

FUTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the City Council of Geiger encourages all citizens and staff to participate in the recovery activities coordinated through our process in partnership with the County Officials of Sumter County, the State of Alabama, FEMA's Long-Term Community Recovery group, and other recovery partners.

Michael Cunningham
Mayor, City of Geiger

Attest: Sandra G. Yarbrough
City Clerk, City of Geiger

SUMTER COUNTY, ALABAMA

ADOPTED AND APPROVED THIS 22nd DAY OF AUGUST 2011.

WHEREAS, the Sumter County Commission of Sumter County, Alabama received a major devastation as a result of the tornado that struck our area on April 15, and 27, 2011; and

WHEREAS, the impact of the tornado included the loss of a major portion of the town of Geiger and other surrounding residential properties, business, educational, church, community facilities and forestry; and

WHEREAS, Sumter County has lost a portion of its tax base and revenue necessary to cover operations resulting from the tornado;

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved that Sumter County, Alabama request that FEMA's Long-Term Community Recovery group and its partner agencies, otherwise known as Emergency Support Function Fourteen (ESF-14), be deployed as soon as possible to fully support Sumter County in our long term recovery.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Sumter County Commission encourages all citizens and staff to participate in the recovery activities coordinated through our process in partnership with the County Officials of Sumter County, the State of Alabama, FEMA's Long-Term Community Recovery group, and other recovery partners.

Ben Walker, Chairman
Sumter County Commission

Attest: Lucinda Cockrell
Commission Administrator

